

EXCERPT



Wait with Me Meeting God in Loneliness

May 19, 2020 | \$16, 176 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4668-9

Jason Gaboury has wrestled with loneliness ever since he can remember. But when he was challenged to see loneliness as a context for friendship with God, things began to change. In these pages God invites you to stop and wait with him in your own moments of isolation and anxiety, journeying from loneliness into a deeper life with God.

“To Be Human Is to Be Lonely.”

Friar Ugo said this to me, his voice cracking with age.

For forty years he served as a Jesuit missionary on the African continent. Now he was sitting across from me, a thirtysomething campus minister trying to make sense of God and my deep loneliness. Despite the gentleness, even fragility, of his appearance, Friar Ugo’s words pierced the space between us like a spiritual searchlight.

My heartbeat sounded in my ears, and I pressed my lips together waiting, *Say something else*, I thought. *Anything.*

I’ve wrestled with loneliness ever since I can remember, perhaps before I can remember. Growing up, my mother would tell stories about our separation at the hospital during the first six weeks of my life, or about times when, as a baby, I’d cry inconsolably for hours. Exasperated, Mom got in the habit of turning up the stereo and leaving me to cry it out. I don’t know what impact either of these situations had on my emerging sense of connection, but I can remember feeling lonely.

That sense of loneliness dogged me through childhood, college, and into adulthood. If Friar Ugo had observed my life from the outside, *lonely* would not be the adjective quick to mind. With two girls in elementary school, our home was filled with Play-Doh, colored paper, and playdates. Sophia and I parented together and partnered in ministry. Our home was often full of students, friends from church, and neighbors from our building. I even had a reputation in our church for being an expert on building community.

Still, loneliness persisted. Washing dishes late on a Tuesday night after a group of friends had gone home, I’d feel strangely lonely, isolated, unknown, and unloved. Clearly, something wasn’t working. *If anyone could help me*, I thought, *Friar Ugo could*. I made an appointment to talk to him, determined to resolve this sense of isolation.

For twenty minutes I’d talked about the ache of loneliness I felt even though it didn’t make sense. Ugo didn’t interrupt. He sat still as the furniture, his eyes dancing with something I couldn’t place: insight, amusement, wisdom?

That conversation would change my life.

“Loneliness is all around us,” Friar Ugo said. Of course, I knew that. Why else would I be sitting in this chair across from this old friar? You know it too. Perhaps you’ve picked up this book because you know the ache of loneliness in your situation. A friend who lived alone for many years said, “The hardest thing for me was just coming home and not having anyone to ask, ‘How was your day?’” Perhaps it seems as if all the friends you used to talk with into the early morning hours have moved away or gotten married. Perhaps you’re a young parent caught in the valley of diapers, isolated from other adults, and emotionally exhausted. Perhaps you’re in a new job or school and miss the familiar faces and relationships.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



Wait with Me Meeting God in Loneliness

May 19, 2020 | \$16, 176 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4668-9

Jason Gaboury is a regional ministry director with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. He's also an Anglican friar (Anglican Order of Preachers). He has contributed to a number of books, including *Drama Team Handbook*. He and his wife, Sophia, live in New York City with their two children. Follow him on Twitter: @jdgaboury.

The technological solution to our loneliness seems to be in our grasp. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are changing the way we see ourselves and the way we have relationships. We can create online communities or chat groups and instantly communicate with people across the world. With access to so many human connections you'd think loneliness would be a thing of the past.

We've never been lonelier.

Loneliness is no joke. Isolation is so powerfully disorienting that solitary confinement is classified as a form of torture.

As I sat in that chair across from Friar Ugo, I could feel the primordial weight of loneliness pressing in on me. I knew the story of Genesis 2. Not good that the man should be alone. So I thought, *God, fix it!* I wanted Friar Ugo to tell me how God was going to take the isolation away. Instead, he started talking about something else.

"Have you ever considered," he asked, "that the loneliness you're experiencing is an invitation to grow your friendship with God?"

I hadn't.

Friar Ugo went on, "Loneliness is part of the human condition. It is the experience of many around the corner who are living on the street. It is the experience of many around the world, separated from home, family, and land because of war or disease. And," he paused, "it was often the experience of our Lord himself. You can look to me . . . or to something else . . . even to religion to try to make you feel better. Or," he said, clearing his throat, "you could see this as the beginning of God's work of transformation in you."

And then we sat there in silence.

I pressed my lips together again, but something in his invitation had already stirred inside me. What if loneliness was a doorway to a deeper life with God? What would that mean? How might this idea reshape the experience?

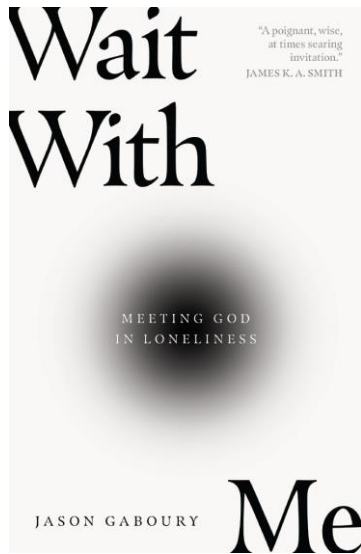
—Adapted from chapter one, "See"



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com





Q & A



Wait with Me Meeting God in Loneliness

May 19, 2020 | \$16, 176 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4668-9

"This, thankfully, is not a book that promises to solve loneliness. It's not a how-to guide for 'getting out there' or a formula for ensuring God will erase your sense of isolation. This book is something very different: a poignant, wise, at times searing invitation to attend to our loneliness as a call from God. This is spiritual writing that is at once urgent and patient, honest and inviting."

Loneliness Is Skyrocketing

What experiences led you to write *Wait with Me*?

Jason Gaboury: I've wrestled with a sense of loneliness for most of my life. A number of years ago, despite a full and relationally demanding ministry, that sense of loneliness peaked. I brought it up with my spiritual director, a Jesuit friar in his seventies, whose question, "Have you ever considered loneliness as an opportunity to develop your friendship with God?" flipped my experience of loneliness upside down. That question launched a spiritual quest to discover friendship with God in the midst of loneliness by reading Scripture again, differently, attending to people and perspectives I'd missed.

Over the last ten years the number of people experiencing loneliness seems to be skyrocketing. This book extends to people who've experienced or are experiencing loneliness an invitation to explore loneliness as an opportunity for a deeper life and friendship with God.

What is the core message of your book?

Jason: Loneliness is all around us and is becoming increasingly acute. Loneliness also presents us with an opportunity to know God more deeply. This idea is different for people who approach loneliness as a problem to solve rather than as an experience to contemplate. Those willing to contemplate loneliness may be surprised at the use of Scripture as the primary tool for contemplation.

What do you want your readers to understand about loneliness?

Jason:

- Loneliness is a context to develop friendship with God.
- Entering into or contemplating the stories of Scripture is a fruitful tool in knowing God in the midst of loneliness.
- God, in the person of Jesus, entered into the most profound loneliness of all, and our loneliness can lead us to deeper compassion for him.
- Loneliness can press us beyond ourselves to greater compassion toward others.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media